

House Bill 408 Statewide Targeted Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act of 2022

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 16, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of House Bill 408.

HB 408 authorizes EMS workers to dispense naloxone to an individual who received treatment for a nonfatal drug overdose or was evaluated by a crisis evaluation team. The bill also requires certain community services programs, health care providers, local health departments, hospitals, and more to establish protocols requiring the dispensing of naloxone, free of charge, to individuals who have an opioid use disorder or are at risk of experiencing a drug overdose. Lastly, it provides immunity to businesses and business owners who in good faith make naloxone available to their employees or patrons.

The public health and safety threat from drug- and alcohol-related intoxication continues to grow. Americans are now more likely to die from opioid overdoses than car crashes.¹ Maryland has made progress in recent years to address this epidemic, but we are still in the midst of a crisis that is devastating families across the state.

Maryland has battled a persistent overdose crisis since well before COVID-19, but pandemic-related stress, grief and despair have exacerbated these concerns. An estimated 2,876 Marylanders lost their lives to overdose between April 2020 and April 2021, a rate that ranked 7th highest in the country during that period.² And as with COVID-19, this overdose epidemic has not affected us all equally. Black Marylanders have experienced a substantial and disproportionate increase in fatal overdoses.³

HB 408 offers additional tools to assist in combating Maryland's overdose crisis. For this reason, MHAMD supports this bill and urges a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.nsc.org/in-the-newsroom/for-the-first-time-were-more-likely-to-die-from-accidental-opioid-overdose-than-motor-vehicle-crash>

² Keating, Dan; Bernstein, Lenny. "100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 12 months during the pandemic." Washington Post, November 17, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/11/17/overdose-deaths-pandemic-fentanyl/>

³ <https://beforeitstoolate.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2021/09/OOCC-Q2-2021-Quarterly-Report.pdf>

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